

Your BWC List Release: It's All About Media Coverage

Visibility for BWC brand + Exposure for BWC employers and partners
+ Raising public awareness about commuter benefits = Success

Embargo the list: when you meet with reporters in advance of the list release date, be sure reporters agree not to release the story prior to the agreed-upon date. (Note: If one reporter happened to break the embargo and release the story early, other reporters would probably not cover the story at all – it would have become “old news”. So, it’s typical -- and expected! -- that reporters will honor an embargo commitment.)

OPTION A Desk-side briefings with reporters – no event

Days and weeks in advance of the official list release date, meet with reporters for interviews about the BWC program & the importance of the local list. Provide them with the story, media kit, etc.

OR

OPTION B Media event

As above, meet with reporters for interviews about the BWC program & the importance of the local list. Also hold a meeting/event with the press where a high profile representative(s) of influential BWC(s) meets with the press to promote the BWC list.

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OPTION B is the best option-- a media event at a BWC- qualified worksite with high profile representative(s). The event should be short & interesting; focus should be on the news story, not pomp & circumstance. Be sure to provide transportation-related visuals (biking, buses, light rail), they are key to getting photos placed in articles and/or tv coverage. A few props (BWC logo, employer logo) will also be useful in getting the type of coverage your participants will value. Prestigious speakers (from BWC firm, local partner organization, EPA) can make the event more compelling. The media event approach is less resource-intensive than an “employer recognition/awards” ceremony -- which is typically not considered news.

NEXT STEPS:

Step 1) Develop your news hook

Step 2) Prepare your BWC press materials

Step 3) “Pitch” the story to the media through extensive (!) phone calling.

STEP 1:

News Hook – Use it in Your Media Materials and During “Pitching”

In Year 1, the release of the list is a story all on its own. For a big media push in Years 2 and beyond, media will value your annual announcement as news – but be consistent & credible AND develop a new “hook” each year.

For example:

- Is there a “biggest” or “first” aspect to your list? If so, use this to your advantage (e.g., first statewide list, largest # of commuters covered of any metro area) as a compelling hook.

- Make the list release relevant by making the connection to local issues/concerns; air quality, congestion, asthma, etc.

- Timing: Plan around events in your area to either tie into (bike to work week) or avoid (election results)

STEP 2:

Media Materials aka Press Kit

Assemble materials using the BWC online versions

- Press Release
- “BWC List”: official list of local BWCs
- “Coalition Background”: information on coalition members
- “Employer Anecdotes”: info on an interesting cross-section (size, location, type of employer) of BWC employers, along with contact information for each
- “Fast Facts”: covers commuting locally, with information on congestion, air quality, etc.

Provide **key** BWC employers and partners with press release & other templates that they can tailor (be careful about who you share the list of BWCs with!). You want their help in Step 3.

STEP 3:

ID & Contact Media Targets

1. Identify key transportation and business writers at daily newspapers and business journals and gather contact information
2. Set up meetings in advance with reporters, brief them 'under embargo' for the day of announcement/event
3. Send advisories to assignment desks at radio and TV stations - if in a tough media market, use exclusives to lure broadcast media. Set up meetings, brief “under embargo”
4. Be persistent, focus on news value, and follow up

Successfully pitching your BWC List to the media

- Consider what the media is looking for: NEWS. Stories of interest to their target audiences.....(What is the target audience of the outlet you're pitching? General public? Young adults? Businesses?)

- Approach large regional as well as local media outlets
- Provide specific examples of local employers ("employer anecdotes")
- Tie-in to local stories/current events wherever possible

Working with Coalition Members & BWC Employers on List Release

- If you have willing partners, identify coalition members and employers with strong, experienced PR departments and ask them to assist with the media outreach effort

- Provide them with the Press Release Template

- Coordinate media outreach to ensure broadest effort possible (divide responsibility for pitching: I'll take the *Times*, you take the *Daily News*)

.....drum roll please.....

THE EVENT

Location of Your Media Event

- Identify appropriate location with the most compelling and creative transportation visuals -- often a BWC-qualified jobsite

- Consider weather, come up with backup plan if necessary

- Should be located (somewhat) conveniently - make it easy for the media to get there in the morning (~10:00am for VIP interviews, earlier if there's an interest in interviewing commuters)

Spokespeople

- Representatives from featured employer(s), EPA, and Coalition should be readily available at the event. Coordinate EPA participation with your POC.

- Each spokesperson should have separate messages to convey (EPA talks about national stats, employer about company, local partner covers local conditions for traffic, air quality, etc.) during interviews – speeches may not be appropriate; plan accordingly.

- Other stories (wildfires!) may pull reporters off your story. Consider creative fallback options – a local cable channel interested in covering the story?

AFTER THE STORY IS OUT --- Tracking Media Results

- Identify local broadcast monitoring companies
- Order hard copies of print coverage in a timely fashion. All of your partners and employers on your list will want copies.
- Organize and share results - on web, in recruitment efforts, etc.
- Provide copies to EPA to ensure that the national BWC website highlights your accomplishments